

Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Area-Vieques

Puerto Rico

EPA ID#: PRN000204694

EPA REGION 2

Congressional District(s): 01

Vieques

Vieques

NPL LISTING HISTORY

Proposed Date: 8/13/2004

Final Date: 2/11/2005

Site Description

The Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Area - Vieques, in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, includes certain areas of the island of Vieques, and nearby waters, that have become contaminated primarily by United States Department of Defense (DoD) activities.

The Vieques Island is located approximately seven miles southeast of Puerto Rico's main island and consists of 33,000 acres. From the 1940s until 2003, the US Navy administered lands on both the western and eastern ends of Vieques Island. Since World War II, portions of the island of Vieques have been used by the U.S. Navy, primarily to conduct activities related to military training. On the eastern side the Navy had the former Vieques Naval Training Range (VNTR) that was used primarily for ground warfare and amphibious training, naval gunfire support training and air to ground training and covered approximately 14,573 acres. The Former Vieques Naval Training Range (VNTR), on the east side of the island, include the Eastern Maneuver Area (including Camp Garcia), the former Surface Impact Area, the former Live Impact Area, and the Eastern Conservation Area. Within the Naval Ammunition Support Detachment (NASD) on the western end of Vieques, the facility includes, but is not necessarily limited to, eight areas for which the Navy considers the ongoing investigations and remediation to be incomplete. It also includes any additional areas that may be discovered to be impacted by DoD activities during the course of investigations of the area. The Naval Ammunition Support Detachment (NASD), which covered 8,200 acres on western Vieques, was used mainly for ammunition loading and storage, and vehicle and facility maintenance, though some training occurred there as well. The waters surrounding all these areas are largely uncharacterized; identified areas of concern include waters impacted by target practice on eastern Vieques, ship anchoring areas north of Vieques, and waters near western Vieques, including Mosquito Pier.

Vieques is home to approximately 9,100 residents. In addition, Vieques has an active and growing tourism industry. Both visitors and residents access beaches, fisheries, and recreational waters that may be impacted by past military training. Upon cessation of Navy activities, large portions of the impacted areas were set aside as a wildlife refuge, which is home to at least 25 endangered species (federal and Puerto Rican), and other sensitive environments.

In June 2003 former Governor Sila Calderon used the Commonwealth's one-time statutory authority (silver bullet) to propose areas of the islands of Vieques and Culebra, defined by the Commonwealth as the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Area (AFWTA), for inclusion on the National Priorities List. EPA proposed the AFWTA in Vieques to the NPL in August 2004. On February 7, 2005, EPA announced the final listing of the AFWTA - Vieques on the NPL.

Threat and Contaminants

Extensive amounts of unexploded ordnance and remnants of exploded ordnance have been identified in the range areas of Vieques, and in the surrounding waters. Hazardous substances associated with ordnance use may include mercury, lead, copper, magnesium, lithium, perchlorate, TNT, napalm, and depleted uranium among others. At the Eastern Maneuver Area, and in the NASD, the hazardous substances present may also include a range of chemicals such as PCBs, solvents, and pesticides.

Cleanup Approach

Work on the site has been divided between two programs: the Munitions Response Program (MRP) and Environmental Response Program. All munitions related work is carried under the MRP. While all typical chemical contamination investigations are covered by the ERP. Within the MRP the site has been divided in multiple Munitions Response Sites (MRS) in east and west Vieques.

Within the ERP the Navy is conducting multiple environmental investigations to determine the nature and extent of contamination at identified Areas of Concern and Solid Waste Management Units. Seven sites are currently under investigation at the NASD and twenty-four sites at the VNTR, to assess potential past chemical releases. These investigations are at different stages of the CERCLA investigation process.

Cleanup Progress

To date, EPA has worked with the Navy to develop and implement a remedial investigation of certain areas of concern on Vieques.

On the Munitions Response Program, the Navy is currently conducting a time critical removal action (TCRA) of munitions and explosives of concern (MEC) on the surface, with EPA oversight, at the former Live Impact Area (LIA). An Expanded Range Assessment/Site Investigation (ERA/SI) is being conducted at several areas, within the restricted areas at the former Vieques Naval Training Range (east Vieques). The Navy is also planning to conduct two Non-Time Critical Removal Actions (NTCRA), one for subsurface MEC at certain beaches Vieques and selected roadways (East and West), and the other NTCRA to remove surface MEC, equivalent or larger than 20 mm, at the former Surface Impact Area (SIA).

Under the Environmental Restoration Program, the Navy is conducting Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) three sites at the Former Naval Ammunition Support Detachment at west Vieques, and also four NTCRA for the removal of solid waste piles/debris started on February 2009. In 2008, a ROD was issued for one operable unit, AOC H.

Expanded Preliminary Assessment/Site Investigations (PA/SI) for approximately 24 operable units started on February 2009.

The Agency has also developed a comprehensive public involvement process which includes a public reviewed Community Involvement Plan.

Site Repositories

All documents regarding this site are located at the USEPA Region 2, Vieques Field Office, Carr. 200 km. 04, Vieques, PR.